

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 23, 2018

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer,

With reports that the Administration is seeking to conclude negotiations with Mexico as part of an updated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by the end of this month, we are urging you to continue to advocate for inclusion of provisions to protect Florida's specialty crop industry. NAFTA has been a great success for many industries in Florida, but it is important to address the challenges it has presented for the specialty crop industry.

As you know, an unprecedented growth in imports from Mexico as a result of its unfair subsidies and illegal seasonal dumping is having a devastating impact on farmers in our home state and throughout the Southeast. Because we share a similar growing season and produce many of the same specialty crops as Mexico, Florida producers have been particularly hard hit. According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Florida has experienced a loss of between \$1 billion and \$3 billion dollars a year since 2000. As the Administration has widely recognized, the seasonal and perishable sectors in the Southeast have suffered disproportionately under the original NAFTA.

It is absolutely critical that any final agreement must allow our fruit and vegetable growers to address the challenges they face from unfairly traded imports. We support the U.S. proposal to use seasonal data to seek regional relief in anti-dumping and countervailing duty cases because we need to provide this sector with the necessary tools to make the case that that Mexico is selling produce at unfairly low prices when certain crops are in season in a particular region.

Since 2002 and as recently as 2015 through Trade Priority and Accountability Act (TPAA), Congress has instructed our trade negotiators to improve our trade laws to "recognize the unique characteristics of perishable and cyclical agriculture; and ensure that import relief mechanisms for perishable and cyclical agriculture are as accessible and timely to growers in the United States." As noted in a recent letter to your office from a wide range of produce associations, "until the seasonality reforms being called for under TPAA are instituted, our producers in the Southeast will have no means of securing relief against the onslaught of unfair Mexican prices during our annual marketing periods."

Similarly, the American Farm Bureau Federation has also stressed that "Any new NAFTA agreement must modernize U.S. mechanisms to provide relief against the onslaught of seasonal fruit and vegetable production in Mexico." Even more concerning, in a recent letter to President Trump, Mexico's president-elect indicated that Mexico intends to substantially

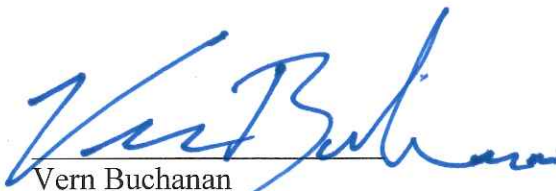
increase its subsidies and "allocate significant resources" to the "reactivation" of its agriculture sector. With an existing \$5 billion agricultural trade deficit with Mexico, nearly all of which is in the fruit and vegetable sector, we cannot afford to wait any longer to address these unfair trade practices and mounting Mexican imports.

Florida is one of the leading producers of fruits and vegetables in the country, and the sector is absolutely critical to our state economy because it supports nearly 100,000 jobs and has an economic impact of more than \$12 billion a year. While we grow the highest quality produce in the world and can compete in the global marketplace, our industry is hurting and in need of access to adequate trade remedies that are accorded to every other sector in the U.S.

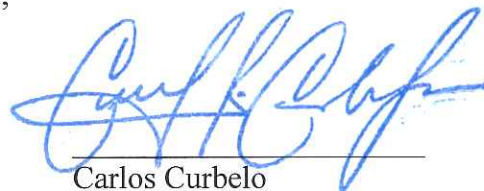
As President Trump stressed in his July 31 speech in Florida, with farmers suffering from unfair trading practices, now is the time to strengthen NAFTA. Again, thank you for your efforts to modernize NAFTA while protecting our specialty crop industry. We urge your steadfast commitment to ensuring these vital trade remedies are included in any final NAFTA agreement.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this critically important matter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress



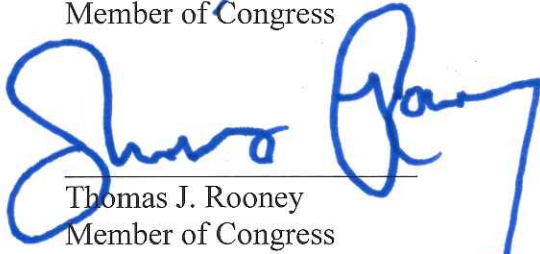
Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



Ted Yoho, D.V.M.
Member of Congress



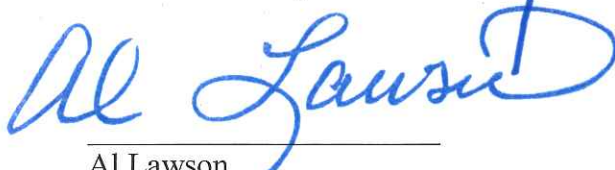
Frederica S. Wilson
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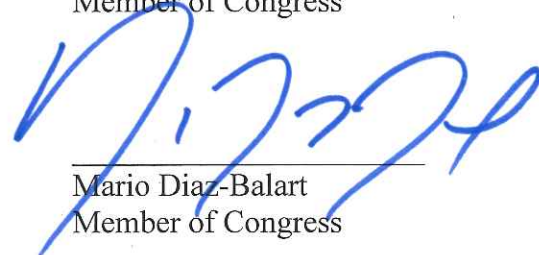
Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress



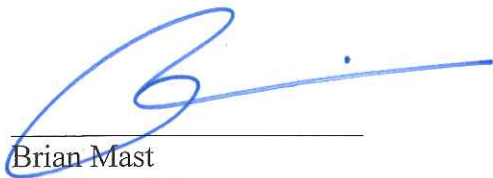
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Al Lawson
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Mario Diaz-Balart
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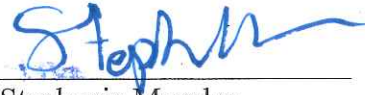
Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Dennis A. Ross
Member of Congress



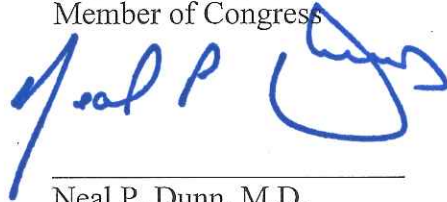
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